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Shyam Kaul

नीलमतम्

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Mufti Sayeed and Shyam Kaul

In Memoriam

Shyam Kaul is no more -----!

He concluded his short journey of life on early hours of 7th January 2013.

The veteran and active journalist for the last three decades, enthusiastically wrote on political, social, cultural and literary topics which were published in various journals and newspapers. ShyamKaul remained associated with the dailies of National Herald and QuomeiAwaz, while brandishing his penmanship both in English and Urdu language.

After the outbreak of terrorism in Kashmir MrKaul studied and delved deep in to the political, psychological and human aspects of the situation, especially on the demoralising impact of the gun culture on Kashmir's culture, tradition and life-style. His in-depth studies on the trauma of displacement, homelessness have been intensely analytical and agonising. His sojourn in Jammu wielded a powerful position in the dailies of Jammu and held a commanding position in the press club of Jammu and its fraternity.

The famed lake Manasbal of Kashmir, limpid and azure in the lap of lush green foliage and towering snow peaks look like an emerald set in pearls. That was the habitat where ShyamKaul opened his eyes under the protective shade of willow groves, swaying poplars and majestic chinars. That is the locale called Safapore, where he was cradled, where he toddled and took his first steps under the gentle winds from the rippling lake. He grew with the companionship of the lake from which he would quench his thirst with a swim and pluck of a lotus or a large lotus leaf, he grew

up while brooding on the fringes of the lake, watch silently, enjoy and learn. It was here on the tranquil shores where he made his acquaintance with books fiction, poetry, history and other literature, by the side of the lolling and placid depths Shyamji learned to acquaint with Ghalib, Iqbal, Faiz, Sahir, Premchand, Krishenchander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Dostouesky, Somerset Mougham, Irving Stone and others. The depth of the lake taught him to probe deep and deeper. Its pervasive silence taught him to talk less and listen more, especially to men of learning, wisdom and experience. It was here that he read in a book "silence is priceless, keep it, unless one had something which was more precious than silence".

Up to the conclusion of his life Shyamji never broke his silence, because up to his end he could find nothing that could be more precious than silence. Instead his silent and lean frame became a stockpile of agonising observation. There was nothing but agony that only eked out of his fingertips over the countless pages through which reminisces the pathetic exodus of the cream of Kashmiri genii, their groaning and sudden buzz in the, otherwise deserted, Jammu Coffee House on the fringes of Tawi River and not now on Residency Road, Srinagar. The entire crowd of same familiar faces of Kashmiri Pandit crowd-writers, teachers, poets, journalists, painters, theatre artists, lawyers, intellectuals and political workers. Even the same set of bearers brought down from Srinagar. But the temper of the crowd is taut and tense, they are here to pour out the pain and agony of their souls. They want to cry for being uprooted from their home and hearth. They do so only in this coffee house which has developed into an island of

fugitives who flocked to it every day, not so much for a cup of coffee as for seeking their own social milieu. It is a cathartic experience for them from which they derive the mental satisfaction of being in surroundings similar to Kashmir.

ShyamKaul's nature of silent introversion turned into deep agony after hearing heart rending utterances from the coffee-lovers of yesteryears, ----- "a man is kidnapped and killed by draining out his blood. Another man's eyes are gouged out, his body is branded with hot iron, or a nail is hammered through his forehead; a needle is pierced through one's eyes. Tongues are chopped off and limbs crushed. A man is sprayed with bullets while he is travelling in a bus; another while he is busy on his work in the office; another as he is entering his sick parents' house, and yet another right inside his home as he tries to hide in a barrel." Shyam's agony deepened when he heard that a woman is kidnapped in broad-day light, gang raped and then sliced into pieces with mechanical saw. A mother of two and a college teacher is kidnapped leaving no trace of her whereabouts. ShyamKaul poured out his silent agony not of his own but as "Agony of Kashmir." He reflects, "Kashmiri Pandits have lost much more than their homes and properties, and Kashmir has lost much more than a small community."

NighatParveen, daughter of Wali Mohammad Vani of Hail Jagir of Baramulla, was back home after five years. She was near four years when she was abducted. Shakeela the daughter of a boat dweller of Zero Bridge, ShamimaAkthar, the T.V. and stage artist, NighatRasool of Bandipore, Atiqah from Sopore, Zuheida from Nadihal, Arsha of Bandipore, Dilshada of Arigam, Misri from Bahagund; Laljan, Raja and Zooni from Booniwari, all are some of the

innumerable who were gang-raped by militants and never returned as the dead never do so. Shyamji had a chance meeting, after many years of migration, with his old engineer (Muslim friend) who had come from Kashmir to seek college admission for his daughter in Jammu. While sitting on a cup of tea in a cafe at Residency Road, the engineer friend threw open the flood gates of his suppressed and agonised feelings. He lamented that there was a total failure of the educational system, and on the top of it all grown-up outgoing girls were unsafe and might get into trouble anytime and any moment.

The abject effacement of Kashmir is quite glaringly visible in ShyamKaul's treatise titled Agony of Kashmir: ----- "streets and roads have become scarce for young women to walk freely as they used to before the arrival of militant and his gun". Confesses "Jamal-ud-Din before media persons that while he was operating in Anantnag district of Kashmir, he had sexually exploited nearly thirty women ----- Most of the parents who have financial resources, send out their daughters to other parts of the country to pursue their studies ----- Abortion of unwanted pregnancies has become a lucrative business for many medical practitioners in Srinagar. There is a large spill over to Udhampur and Jammu where hundreds of abortion cases are handled ----- Terrorists maintain harems where abducted girls are used as objects to satisfy their lust for sex."

Shyam Kaul's prophetic words "*Kashmir has lost much more than the small community*"

Yes, but I would specify: Kashmir has lost its conscience.

- P N Kachru

Go Gentle into That Good Night.

- By Shiben Kachroo

It is when someone close to you passes away that one's own mortality ceases to be only an idea. It becomes a perceptible presence by your side. Shyamji's going reiterates the feeling.

Shyamji's strong bond with his village, Safapore, and his lake, Manasbal, - the distance from which gave him a lot of anguish during the last twenty odd years - is finally dissolved. He may have gone to seek Manasbals of higher worlds, but here he remains ensconced in the hearts of his loved ones and numerous friends and admirers.

All of us who knew Shyamji even remotely miss him. All of us grieve silently in our own ways at his passing. All of us cherish the moments we have shared with him which will continue to exude their abiding fragrance

Shyamji's was a striking personality. Nature was generous to him with her gifts. He was tall and unusually handsome, with a graceful carriage, and a visage that would light up with a charming smile the moment he made eye contact with a friend or an acquaintance. ShantiveerKaul in his homage published in the Greater Kashmir, remarks "Shyamji could walk into a room and light it up. Even the thickest pall of gloom would be lifted, the most sombre moment lightened." That is how most of us will remember him.

Shyamji had an uncanny gift of striking rapport with all kinds of people irrespective of age or status. He was at ease with movers and shakers of Kashmir political and social life, as well as, with the hoi polloi of the world of art, literature – and his chosen field of karma – journalism, in whose company he felt himself particularly

comfortable. Generation gap did not exist for him. It was more the younger generation that gravitated towards him. The reason for this was, to a great extent, the ease with which he could make contact with younger minds and the milieu they represented, and win their trust. He was never condescending to his young friends. He gave his interlocutors and their opinions considerable respect. He never preached or pontificated, which is generally the predilection affecting intellectuals who think they have an advantage of experience over the youth.

Shyamji possessed sophistication. He had an uncluttered mind and unlittered heart. Despite being in thick of things he had an unhurried way of going about his business. He was not prone to the bouts of breathless rush of the rat race, nor was he subject to the clamour of achieving targets. In these hurtling times he kept his own pace, as if time waited upon him. Yet, he was sensitive in Shelley's 'Aeolian harp' sense, and could register the slightest change in the tune of the passing breeze, and in his own way internalise the change. His survival in Kashmir's political social and humanitarian maelstrom without losing his perspective is a testimony to his maturity as a human being and a journalist.

Journalism was Shyamji's bread and butter, and occasionally, a seekh kabab, he would joke, but his main love was poetry, especially Urdu poetry and history, in that order. When, on rare occasions, he would warm up and begin his exposition on some point of history, especially the history of Islam, one could not but shut up and listen. He made it so dramatic in the telling that one felt history peeling its

layers of antiquity before one's eyes. He delved into the history of Kashmir as assiduously as a student, and discovering new nuggets of information.

Physical, intellectual, and cultural. As it devastated the lives of all Kashmiris it also threw his into shambles. It took time for all to reassemble their shattered lives, so did it take time for Shyamji to come to grips with the situation. To a large extent he did return to his normal self. Hope seemed to return to him. Not the hope of going back to Kashmir and taking up the threads of life again after a short and unpleasant interruption. He was too mature and realistic to entertain that kind of delusion. But the hope that reason and good sense would someday return to Kashmiri people and make them see the harm that has been done to the cultural fabric of the state – a damage that would in course of time kill what is essentially and subtly Kashmiri, and turn it irretrievably into a Taliban clone. His prescription was for all intellectually vibrant people to direct their efforts to bringing back rationality, human values and respect for the essentials of Kashmiriat to the centre stage. Then, some day in the future, Kashmiriat in its true form would establish itself. The present generation of Kashmiri inside and

outside the valley may not be able to see that day, but a positive movement towards that goal could be on its way.

He wrote prolifically about this dream. After leaving the valley writing about Kashmir, its history, art, culture, loss and agony had become almost an obsession. Other topics seemed to have dried up for him. In all this he did not allow himself to be overwhelmed by strident rage, which was, and to some extent still is, the mood of Kashmiris, more so, of the exiles, today. He remained unscathed with the searing winds of anger and hate. In his writing he comes off more as a lover jilted by his true love than an angry and brutalised exile.

Shyamji did not take Dylan Thomas' advice,

***“Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage at the passing of the light.”***

Although he had lots of reasons to rage at human perfidy, betrayal and loss, he had grown above it. His inherent goodness had finally prevailed upon any other negative emotion. Shyamji went 'gentle into that goodnight', without complaint, without any fuss, without any commotion.

SHYAM KAUL ----- Gentleman Journalist

By V K WATTAL

A veteran scribe, writer, analyst, researcher, political commentator and an eminent broadcaster, ShyamKaul, breathed his last at his residence in New Delhi on January, 07, 2013. A dyed in the wool journalist, known for his rare qualities of Head and Heart. ShyamKaul was the last icon from the Hall of Fame of Journalists from the valley. He was a legendary who carried the baton of high ethics of Journalism set in by Sh. Prem Nath Bazaz, Sh. R K Kak, Sh. N L Wattal and Sh. J N Sathu, etc to name a few. In the words of Sh. Shyam Kaul, they were the trail blazers of Modern Journalism in the J&K state.

He was simply brilliant, analytical and incisive while writing on political subjects. The articles he wrote were specimens of facile prose and always educative, informative and thought provoking.

Shyamji ---- as KaulSahab, was affectionately called by his colleagues and friends, was born in a well to do family of Safapur (Now a part of dist. Ganderbal). It is said about his family that any Government employee who used to be posted in Safapur, they used to be offered free residential and food facilities. He had his early school education in the village school. He joined S.P. College and got his graduation. He got admitted in Lucknow University and got his Masters. He also got diploma for Advertising while in Lucknow. Moving to Bombay he joined the Advertising and Commercial department of Filmistan. Coming back to Srinagar he joined the Press Asia International as a Reporter and at the same time was appointed the staff reporter of the State owned "Kashmir Post". With this started the long innings of active Journalism

which lasted nearly six decades. While working for Kashmir Post, ShyamJi was elevated to the post of Co-editor which was being edited by eminent journalist Sh. J N Zutshi. After the paper seized its publication, ShyamJi joined Radio Kashmir as Regional Correspondent.

This writer would like to draw the attention of the readers towards an interesting incident, with this hope that they might like it. Last year when this writer was penning a write up on "RADIO KASHMIR" (Which was published by KOSHUR SAMACHAR), I approached ShyamJi for his views on his working in Radio Kashmir. Then I asked him a pointed question. "KaulSahab, after getting your Masters why didn't you join the Education department as a College Lecturer and instead joined Journalism". KaulSahab, in his characteristic way replied. "In the post independent period when Radio Kashmir started its operations in the valley, there were no Radio Sets with the families, only HALQA RADIO SETS (Only Community sets were set up by the Government). I used to run to the community center at the NEWS time. I would return again when it was time for political Comments (called "RAFTAR ZAMANA"). By Sh. NandLal Wattal. In the school we used to get Daily "KHIDMAT" edited by Sh. Wattal. His name had become a household name in the valley. It was my burning desire that I should also become as famous as Sh. Wattal. It was during my college days that I was face to face with him in his office".

ShyamKaul's journalistic career which spanned for nearly six decades can be divided into two phases. The first phase when he started his career in early sixties

till 1990. The second phase from 1990 till he breathed last.

In the first phase which almost he started as a trainee and learnt the proverbial tricks of the rope in the shortest possible time. The command over the English language and being a voracious reader became his greatest asset and made him much sought after journalist. Being fresh from the university he had acquired progressive, secular and rational approach to life. A thorough gentleman by nature he had only friends. He was at ease with all shades of people, be they ----- politicians, academicians, social activists, bureaucrats, his own tribe of professional colleagues ---- - irrespective of cast, creed and religion. He would be listened to with rapt attention and would ask questions without any hesitation. He marketed many politicians who later on occupied the highest positions in the state politics. He guided many a budding journalists and for them it can safely be said that he was their "GURU". Since he was working with Radio Kashmir, most of the time during this phase, he had some compulsions and these compulsions denied him the free use of PEN. To sum up one can say that it was a phase of hunky dory and happy go lucky life both professionally as well as personally.

ShyamJi, retired from Radio Kashmir in 1985. He became the bureau Chief of National Herald and QuamiAwaz. He joined the oldest newspaper of the state The "DAILY KHIDMAT" as Special correspondent. Besides he started writing for other leading Newspapers of the state.

The monster of terrorism had already started raising its head from late 1988. It started with stray incidents like burning of Schools or a looting of Liquor shop. Strikes and

hartals given by the various terrorist outfits had become the order of the day. The terrorists were ruling the roost. The local press was giving them a great publicity by way of printing their photographs and statements. The loudspeakers from the mosques were blaring the threats day in and day out. The State Government, it seemed had totally collapsed. There was no co-ordination between Central and State Government. The crescendo reached when Government employees including the top brass associated with the "Azadi movement.

The Non-Muslim journalists were being asked to leave the valley and the field was left open to the Muslim scribes who with their bended knees and spines were virtually eating from the palms of the terrorist outfits.

ShyamJi was the last of the Non-Muslim journalists to leave the valley. Reaching Jammu, he was allotted a room in the Govt. Guest House with other journalists who had been forced to leave the valley. It was middle of 1990. With this started the second phase of Journalism which lasted till he breathed last.

ShyamJi was a shattered and a disgusted man. ShyamJi ---- the ebullient, laughing and carefree had yielded to a depressed and silent one with creases appearing on his face. It was a lightning from a clear blue sky and a backstabbing. Back stabbing, it was not from strangers but from those with whom he had spent the decades and prime of his youth. The "ME" and "THEM" thoughts had never crossed his thinking. He would slip into long periods of silence. For some time he was at a loss to understand where he had gone wrong. When the four of them ----- Sh. N L Wattal, Sh. J N Sathu, Sh. M L Kak, would sit together at Guest house, ShyamJi would open up. Such

meetings helped ShyamJi to limp back to normalcy. Though the shock was equal for all of them, but it is a fact that it was too much for Shyam Ji.

With the passage of time, the thinking of ShyamJi, took a U turn. Now that he was not an active professional, he had slowly started taking a keen interest in community affairs. He wrote extensively about the problems being faced by the displaced persons languishing in the single room accommodations of the camps set up by the State Government. In his numerous write ups he gave the correct perception of Kashmir problem.

During the two decades he wrote on different topics pertaining to Kashmir. As the proverb goes that when the creative people like poets, authors, writers get hurt, it is the time they churn out the best. The same happened to ShyamJi. He poured his heart out in his writings. These write ups were compiled into books.

"The AGONY OF KASHMIR" and ***"KASHMIR CALLED PARADISE"***, were widely read and received good reviews, from the critical analysts.

ShyamJi, a tall person with an average built and an ever smiling face was a connoisseur of good clothes and was always immaculately dressed. He loved good food and was a "Chef" in his own right. He was

an expert in cooking Non veg dishes. A voracious reader, he read books on different topics. It was a well known fact that he was the undisputed writer of English.

This writer owes a lot to Uncle Shyam Ji. He treated me as his own ---- it was a father son relationship. After the demise of my father he had become my guide, inspiration and mentor. He had one "complain" against me and the complain was ***"WHY I DID NOT TAKE UP THE JOURNALISM"***

He had been lacerated when circumstances drove him out of the valley – the land of his ancestors. As one of the hundreds of thousands of displaced Kashmiri pundits, "the past for me is not merely the old, unhappy far off things and battles long ago, it is a reality which lives with me and which in many essential respects is a prolongation of the past. It is a gnawing pain in the soul that comes more agonizingly alive when one comes across things written down the years ago".

Shyam Ji, loved his land of birth with the passion of a "LOVER", with the care of a doting "MOTHER", and sometimes with the dedication of an ardent "ADMIRER". Being a rational and progressive in outlook he still had pinned his hopes on "TOMORROW" when he will go back to his land of birth and ancestors. He was not destined to see that "TOMORROW".



Kamla Shanker : An Iconic Kashmiri Pandit Woman

- S.N. Pandita

(With inputs from Commodore. Lalit Shanker, Mrs. Usha Shanker & Dr. Anjuli Bamzai)

No matter how glorious eras may be, they pass by. And so do people; even the most mighty and splendid of them. Kamla Shanker is no more and though we all know that time spares none; yet it was almost unbelievable for our family that she could ever cease to be. We were so used to her long physical presence. Aged 90, Kamla Shanker passed away on November 15, 2012 at Noida, in NCR, Delhi. She was my aunt. Her demise has caused an irreparable void in our family. For her entire life of 90 years she remained a very private person. But she was a woman of great substance, wisdom and achievements; a speaking Kashmiri and a reservoir of native folklore. It is a bittersweet task to inditethis post-script as a last testimony, however inadequate, to the worth of this great woman whom we called Jiji- the loving one, the adorable one, a perfect foil of a mother and friend.

Iconic Family Ancestry & Claim to Learning & Scholarship:

Kamla came from one of the most outstanding literary families of Kashmir, the Zadoos, well known for their contributions to scholarship and learning. The family

originally belonged to village Zadipur and it was sometime about the middle of the 19th century that the family moved to live in Srinagar and since then has produced some of the titans of Kashmir scholarship and learning. The patriarch of the family Pandit KeshavBhatZadoo was one of the well-known Sanskrit scholars of his time. He served as a Raj Pandit at the court of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. However, Keshav Bhat Zadoo's iconic reputation and fame remains preserved as the owner and writer of a unique Atherva-veda manuscript that belonged to the paippalada chakha. Written on birch-bark in Sarada character this manuscript of one of the four Vedas was the only one of its kind in the whole world.

It was sometime about 1874 that the famous German Indologist Rudolph Von Roth desired to get hold of this unique manuscript as he was engaged in the preparation a critical edition of the Atherva-veda. He had located its presence in Kashmir. Through quasi-official channels Von Roth impressed upon the British authorities in India to persuade the Maharaja to secure its possession. Following a diligent search, the manuscript, at last, was located to be in the possession of Pandit Keshav Bhat Zadoo. Initially he declined to part with it stating that 'a Brahmin is prohibited from selling a book, cow and daughter'. However, it was

not long before he succumbed to the royal inducements. Keshav Bhat relented but not before spelling out his terms. These included that the manuscript would be given only on loan and not before he was allowed time to prepare two copies of it; one for his own use and the other to be kept in the royal library collection. The terms spelled out were met and the original birch-bark manuscript finally reached Von Roth in Germany in 1875. More than two decades later its luxurious facsimile edition was prepared by Richard Garbe and Maurice Bloomfield and published in 1902 in Germany. In the following decades much came to be worked on this unique Veda including its translation and commentary by Dwight Whitney published under Harvard Oriental Series in the U.S by Harvard University, Boston.

It is pertinent here to mention that it is 138 years since Keshav Bhat Zadoo's original relic went out from Kashmir. It was never returned to the owner during his lifetime. Nor has it been returned to his descendants or the land of its origin till date. At present the rare manuscript is housed in Tubingen University Library where it ranks as the greatest Eastern collection in its possession. The trend of reclaiming art and heritage objects by countries and original owners is lately gaining a world-wide recognition. Perhaps, it may be time that the community also asserts to claim this heritage artifact and regain its possession.

Keshav Bhat Zadoo had two sons named Prasad Bhat and Hara Bhat. Hara Bhat followed the footsteps of his father. He is well known as one of the leading Sanskrit scholars of Kashmir in the last century. His seminal work on Pancastavi and scores of other Sanskrit texts has earned him great name and fame. Prasad Bhat had two sons

named Jagadhar and Vasudev. Jagadhar, the elder one, like his legendary uncle Hara Bhat also became an outstanding Sanskrit scholar. He served as Professor of Sanskrit at Sri Pratap College, Srinagar. His iconic name is well preserved for posterity through his great works, namely the first edition of the Nilamatapurana (1924) with Ramjilal Kanjilal; Lokaprakasa (1932); Kashmiri-Sanskrit translations of the 17th century Spanish classic Don Quixote (1936) with Nityanand Shastri; and Gilgit Manuscripts (1938). The Kashmiri and Sanskrit translations of Don Quixote at present adorn the shelves of Harvard University Library in the US. Besides, Jagadhar Zadoo edited as many as 16 other old Sanskrit works for the J&K Research Department. Suffice it say that Jagadhar Zadoo happened to be the son-in-law of the legendary Kashmiri Sanskrit scholar Mahamahopdhyaya Pandit Mukund Ram Shastri.

Vasudev Zadoo, Kamla's father, was equally distinguished. Instead of following the family avocation of Sanskrit scholarship, he pursued to study science. He obtained a post-graduate degree in Chemistry from the Punjab University, Lahore in 1925. Following a short stint as a college lecturer at the Prince of Wales College, Jammu, Vasudev went to America in 1927 for higher studies in engineering sciences and thus became the first native Kashmiri ever to go to America. There, he studied at the world famous Harvard University. He completed his Master's in Civil & Sanitation Engineering in 1929. However, before sailing back to India he pursued higher studies for another two years in Europe (UK, France & Germany). He returned to Kashmir in 1931 and later joined the state engineering department. In due course Vasudev Zadoo rose up the official ladder to retire as Chief Engineer. He also had the distinction of

heading the J&K Chapter of AMIE, the Associated Membership of Indian Engineers.

Martyrdom of the Family and Service to the Nation's Freedom Struggle:

Kamla parental family has not only given some of the titans of learning and scholarship in the last century but also the nation one of its earliest native Kashmiri martyrs during the 1947-48 war with Pakistan. As an active member of the J&K National Militia Force, Pushkar Nath Zadoo Kamla's younger brother, volunteered for military training for self defence. After completing the training he was deployed on the Titwal Front where he died in action in July 1948. Like the martyrdom of another native Kashmiri Mohammed Maqbool Sherwani, Pushkar Nath Zadoo's heroic sacrifice is a story of gallantry which has deservingly gone into the folklore of post-independent India's military saga.

However, Pushkar was not the only son of the Zadoo family who took the patriotic road. The family gave its other sons too in the service of the nation. They were Kamla's cousins, named Kanti Chander Zadoo and Dina Nath Zadoc, both sons of Prof Jagadhar Zadoo. They served in the Indian National Army under Netaji Subash Chander Bose. Kanti Chander Zadoo rose high up in the INA hierarchy and served as Secretary to Netaji Bose. However, mystery surrounds Kanti Chander's death. He was last reported to have been with Netaji Bose aboard the ill-fated aircraft that later crashed in Japan in 1945 during its flight from Myanmar, then Burma. As nothing definite and conclusive has ever been made about Netaji Subash Chander Bose's death in that plane mishap, the Zadoo family particularly KantiChander's wife Satyavati never

actually believed that her husband had died. Satyavati, who passed away in 2005 never considered herself to be a widow till the very end. However, with passage of time the Zadoo's accepted the harsh reality that Kanti Chander too perished in the same aircraft in which Netaji Bose died. Dina Nath Zadoo also served in the INA. He too was accorded the coveted honour of a Freedom Fighter for the services he rendered to the nation during the freedom struggle.

Early Education:

Born in 1923 to Smt Sonamali and Pandit Vasudev Zadoo, Kamla grew at a time when the world was reeling under the Great Depression of the 30s. It was the time when women in Kashmir were still confined to smoke and fire of the household kitchen. During those times woman education was a taboo and very few girls were sent to school for studies. However, Kamla broke that cage. Her father Vasudev, himself a figure of enlightenment and a staunch advocate of women education and their emancipation, admitted his daughter in a private pathshala run by the Women's Welfare Trust at Gundi Ahlamar locality in Srinagar city. In doing so, Vasudev withstood the stiff resistance of parochial and conservative pressures that were against women education in Kashmir. After completing her formal primary education in the pathshala, Kamla next went to a private school in Anantnag and passed her Matriculation Examination of the Punjab University in 1936. Inspired by the example of her father and with clear determination to achieve higher education and mind full of progressive ideas, Kamla took admission in Sri Pratap College, Srinagar, then a co-educational institution. Moulvi Ibrahim was principal in 1936. Never before a Kashmiri Pandit had girl sought admission to a college

in Srinagar. At the time she was the only Kashmiri Pandit girl in a batch of 15 other girls that had taken the admission in the college. Subsequently Kamla graduated from the college, then, affiliated to the Punjab University, Lahore, in 1940. She thus became the first 'woman graduate' of the Kashmiri Pandit community. She achieved this distinction during the tenure of Autar Krishen Kitchloo who headed the college as its principal.

Marriage & Higher Education:

Sometime in the same year, 1940, Kamla got married to Gouri Shanker, son of the renowned Sanskrit scholar Professor Nityanad Shastri. Luck favoured Kamla. The academic environment of her new home and the affectionate goading by the eminent father-in-law "encouraged her urge for further studies". Soon the couple decided to go to Lahore and study there for their post-graduation degrees. Both joined the Forman Christian College. Kamla took admission for M.A. in English Literature and Gouri Shanker enrolled himself for M.A. in Mathematics. The couple successfully completed their respective post-graduation degrees in 1942. However, the achievement for Kamla was unique. It yet again made her the first Kashmiri Pandit woman to qualify with a post graduate degree. A year after completing her post-graduation, Kamla enrolled herself for B.Ed degree. She completed it in 1943 from what was then known as Prince of Wales College, and now called as Government Gandhi Memorial Science College, Jammu. Kamla obtained the afore-stated higher educational qualifications at a time when the world was trapped in the raging conflagrations of World War II and society in Kashmir was still on the fringes of modernity.

Formative Years & Early Struggle:

After gaining these academic degrees, Kamla was appointed as a teacher in Government Girls High School in Srinagar. However, her husband Gouri Shanker found a position on the teaching faculty of Saint Joseph's College in Baramulla. During their separation circumscribed by their professional obligations in different places of postings came the Pakistan tribal war in 1947. The brutal invaders did not spare even the Saint Joseph's college, hospital and the convent. As a result the college had to be closed down. It forced Gouri Shanker to seek re-employment. This brought him to Delhi. Kamla who was still in Srinagar, joined the women's wing of the J&K National Militia Force and took military training for self defence. Her brother Pushkar Nath, and other younger sisters Krishna Zadoo (later Krishna Misri, famous as the former Principal of Government Women's College, Srinagar), and Indu (later Indu Pandit an equally renowned and illustrious personality) followed suit. Thus Kamla and her sisters became the earliest Kashmiri Pandit women who took up arms for self defence in Kashmir in 1947. Notable among other KP women, who also later joined the women militia wing was NirmalKusum Peshin later Kachru; wife of the eminent writer and journalist Onkar Kachru, Nirmal Peshin pre-deceased Kamla by just about a month or so in October 2012.

Teaching Career & Academic Pursuits:

The circumstances surrounding the passing away of Kamla's brother Pushkar during war with Pakistan in July 1948 devastated the Zadoo family. It took a long time for the family to overcome the tragedy. Kamla gave up her job with the Jammu & Kashmir government to join her husband at Delhi.

There, she worked for a brief period as a teacher and in the meanwhile her husband Gouri Shanker was selected as a Professor of Mathematics at the Joint Services Wing in Dehradun. Sometime about 1954 the Joint Services Wing, Dehradun moved to Khadakvasla in Poona, the present day Pune. It was renamed as National Defence Academy. There, in Poona, Kamla taught at the NDA English High School. Later she moved to the prestigious Loyola High School where she taught for next twenty years. It was during her stint at the Loyola High School, but much later after her two children were grown up that Kamla yet again undertook academic pursuits. She enrolled herself for an advanced course in English language at the famous Institute of Languages, Hyderabad. Later, she added one more educational qualification by way of an M.A Degree in History from Pune University in 1974. The achievement made her the oldest Kashmiri Pandit woman student of an Indian university.

Life at National Defence Academy:

From the very inception to date, National Defence Academy remains one of the most important and primary nurseries of the Indian defence establishment. The Shanker couple (Gouri & Kamla) were part of its work force from the very beginning. Quite early during her stint of teaching at the NDA English High School, Kamla left the mark of an ideal teacher. She inspired her students through example and motivation and thus helped them develop the potential of their capacities. In more than one sense she was a spark that set the 'combustible' student a-fire. Many children Kamla taught in school excelled in their respective professional lives.

Life at National Defence Academy provided an environment that was full of

learning opportunities, charm, thrill and excitement of service culture. A long stay there provided Kamla great opportunities of interacting with many senior officers of the Indian military brass. Among the celebrated names from navy included Admirals Samson, Vishnu Bhagwat and Sushil Kumar. The relationship with them over a period of time turned into friendly family ties. Admiral Samson's distinguished daughter Leela Samson, a world renowned dancer and the Chairman of the Film Censor Board of India and lately the Chairperson of Kalakshetra, Chennai considered the Shanker house as second home as also was the case with Sushil Kumar.

Notable family friends from the army included General Bakshi and General Habibullah who served as Commandants of the Academy. At present General Habibullah's son Wajahat Habibullah is the Chairman of the National Commission for Minorities. Earlier he retired as Secretary to Government of India. Likewise, Kamla had the opportunities of interacting with General J.N. Choudhury and Field Marshall. S.F.J.H. Manekshaw, both former army chiefs- during several social dos and formal functions held in the Academy. Another top Indian civil servant, the present-day Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai has grown into distinction before Kamla's eyes and was her student. Ranjan's father, the senior Mathai was Gouri Shanker's colleague at the NDA and like him served on the faculty of the Academy. Ties between the two families were further strengthened by the fact that they lived in proximal dwelling units on the NDA campus. Kamla's other students who excelled are Lt General N.P. Aul and Vice Admiral Vinod Pasricha. Both considered her as their role model.

As the Shanker couple lived amidst an

environment imbued with 'service culture' it was natural that their son Lalit took to a military career. He joined the Indian Navy. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy and Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Lalit rose to become Commodore in the force. After serving the navy with a distinction for thirty five years, he retired in 2002. Lalit's career in the navy provided Kamla opportunities to step on the decks of India's naval might and these included INS Vikrant, Virat, Tir, Krishna, Venduruthy, Angre and Vijaydurg. From their decks, sighting rising waves from the bosom of the oceans in whistling wind striking her face, Kamla certainly felt the satisfaction of a proud mother and a self-achiever. She had the singular proud opportunity of sailing onboard INS Krishna where her son was an officer, for 'a day at sea' when the ship visited Massawa, Ethiopia, where her husband was on deputation at the Naval Academy. These experiences broadened her mind and lifted her imagination to become what she was.

Learning Journeys around the World:

As one of the most highly accomplished, educated and emancipated women of her generation, Kamla became a symbol of emancipation. It was this spirit in her that took her across four continents, Asia, Africa, America and Europe. Her journeys of immense learning and adventure spread for more than forty years and Kamla in a way, travelled to the edges of the earth. Among the many places she travelled to, the notable ones are Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor, Aswan, Massawa, Addisababa, London, Oxford, Cheshire, Cardiff, Scotland, Cambridge, Stratford, New York, Washington, Yale, Virginia, Columbus, Boston, and Austin, Pittsburgh. Accompanying her husband Gouri Shanker, on his overseas assignment

at the Royal Naval Academy, Addis Ababa in Ethiopia during 1967-70, Kamla had the rare honour of meeting the then Ethiopian king, Emperor Halle-Selassie.

Kamla was a great admirer of world cultures and a keen observer of history. It was on account of this urge in her that she did not miss to visit places of great cultural and historical interests during her travels abroad. And no wonder that she always carried the sublime satisfaction in having been fortunate to have visited and seen some of the world's great museums, libraries and many a places of connoisseur's interests. These included the Pyramids, Holocaust Museum, Art & Craft Museum, Vietnam War Museum, Arlington Cemetery, Victoria & Albert Museum, British Library, Ashmolean Museum, US Congress Library, Harvard University Library, Virginia University Library and the British Museum. It was not chance but the spirit of adventure that this daughter of the Vitasta walked by the banks, roved in and dived into other great rivers of the world like the Nile, Mississippi, Thames, Rhine and Danube to experience the catholicity of life beyond the limitations imposed by borders. All these learning and adventurous experiences gave Kamla a world view of life beyond the considerations of parochial conservatism.

As a mother, Kamla was proud not only of her son's achievements but also that of her daughter Anjuli. She knew that she had passed the baton, imbued with academic and intellectual spirit, to her daughter Anjuli. An alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, Anjuli is a double Ph.D in Physics and Earth System and Global Changes. She is currently working as a Program Director at the National Science Foundation in the U.S. and lives in Virginia. Stepping on some of the great university campuses of the

world in the company of Anjuli- a high achiever academician- gave Kamla the opportunities of imbibing the values and culture of the knowledge world that in a way shaped her own learning journey. The refined academic and intellectual honing thus gained allowed Kamla to be at total ease in interacting with men of letters like Dr. Karan Singh, J.N. Kaul and Prof Satya Vrat Shastri during several intellectual gatherings she managed to attend in Delhi despite her advanced age. She was also the first lady of The International Youth Hostel, Chanakapuri, Delhi which was looked after by her husband after his retirement. While at IYH, she had the opportunity of again interacting with students who came from different parts of the world.

A Family Person:

In the extended large family, Kamla was darling of the household. She loved everyone in the family and so too everyone in the family loved her. She gave respect to all and earned it for herself too. All the siblings in the family adored her and it is hard to say who more than the other. She was an excellent communicator with one and all, be they young or old; literate or illiterate. This quality enabled her to gel with people both at formal or informal gatherings. Possessing the raw bone of a householder and caring heart of a mother, Kamla was a systematic and disciplined personality.

However, there were times that showed her to be in some hurry to get things done. This made her encouraging, adventurous and a go getter – a quality that helped her children grow up by roughing out real life situations. Growing with these experiences, the children always found her to be supportive of their efforts.

Kamla was a voracious reader and had a great appetite for books; and it is no exaggeration to state that she read many thousand books in her lifetime, a feat that may remain unconquered for a quite a while among the Kashmiri Pandit women.. Her reading interests were large and varied. The books she loved most to read were mainly on history, philosophy, English literature, adventure and biographies. Not only was Kamla proficient in academic and intellectual engagements and dispositions, she was equally an adept in culinary art. The range included north and south Indian dishes to several western delicacies.

She dabbled in colours too. Her paintings included landscapes and portraits. Among several she has made, the portraits of Rabindra Nath Tagore and her husband leave no one in any doubt that she was quite accomplished in this form of art though throughout her life she remained an amateur. Kamla was equally deft at knitting, sewing and embroidering. Very often she would present hand-made gifts to her near and dear ones in the family and large circle of friends on various occasions. She always believed that gifts- self knitted, sewn or embroidered- added value to the tokens of affection and remembrance. All these traits and accomplishments made Kamla a multi-faceted personality- the mother, maker and silent leader of her generation.

Braving the End :

A woman of indomitable spirit, Kamla was strong and courageous, both in the mental and physical sense. She lived bravely and died bravely as well. Towards the end she suffered a protracted illness that confined her to bed in and out of hospitals for about a year. But never ever did she show any sign of agony or pain her body may have

undergone as a result of ailment she was afflicted with. Her body was as steely as her mind. She bore her sickness with saintly calm and fortitude. Each time when asked 'how are you' she would smilingly nod and say 'I am fine'. Such was the level of her physical endurance even as her body was being wrecked by the disease. Perhaps, Kamla's journey from sickness to end is best echoed in the poem, written by an unknown retired naval officer, entitled: I am Fine; Thank You – (from New York Review)

*“There is nothing the matter with me
I am healthy as I can be
I have arthritis in both my knees
And when I talk, I talk with wheeze.
My pulse is weak and my blood is thin
But I am awfully well for the shape I am in.
Arch supports I have for my feet or;
I would not be able to be on the street
Sleep is denied me night after night
My memory is failing; my head in spin
But I am awfully good for the shape I am in.
The moral is this as the tale unfolds
That for you and me who are growing old
It is better to say I am fine with a grin
Than to let folks know the shape you are in”.*

Tribute:

Birth and death come from God. From these comes the gift of life. The so called 'death' is just a way of life to change and transform. In that sense death is an eternal form of life and transformation. Upanishads remind us that beneath the sullen cold ash of death glow the ambers of life. “If we are so much pleased with life, then why be displeased with death; for both come from the hand of the same Master”, says Michelangelo.

Kamla Shanker lived a long, complete and full life and yet her death feels like a big void. She is simply unforgettable. Her memory is adorable. It is sacred too. Remembering her feels like recalling the 'sweetness' of stolen raw pomegranates when young and lingering fragrance left between the fingers after plucking a jasmine or an iris flower.

Gilgit Manuscripts: Gift of the Dogras to World Heritage

(History, Provenance & Circumstances Attending their Discovery)

- S.N. Pandita

The Place of Find

Situated in one of the world's remotest, densest and lofty mountain ranges and cradled by the majestic Himalayas and stunning peaks of the Karakoram ranges, Gilgit abounds fascinating valleys and rugged mountain spurs. Forming the northern outpost of the territories of Jammu & Kashmir state in the undivided India, it has been an integral part of the Indian sub-continent from times immemorial. Land-locked between the frontiers of great and ancient empires of India, Russia and China, its strategic location has always served as the 'churning bowl' of religious, political and cultural affairs between these countries and as a result been within the ambit of their influence. This geo-strategic reality and religio-cultural confluence came into sharp focus with the discovery of, now internationally famous, Gilgit Manuscripts in 1931 A.D. Ever since, the manuscripts discovered there have become cynosure of cultural and historical experts.

Subject & Antiquity

These manuscripts assigned to 5th-6th century cover a wide range of subjects like iconometry, folk tales, philosophy, medicine, several related areas of general knowledge and life including four sutras from Buddhist canons including the famous Lotus Sutra of the Mahayana Buddhism. These manuscripts, written on birch-bark, paper and palm leaves, are the first Buddhist manuscripts discovered in India. In most of the cases they have been found in Ceylon, Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan and Mongolia.

Circumstances Attending Discovery

It was in the last days of May 1931 A.D. that some local cowboys watching their flocks above Naupur village, some two miles west of Gilgit cantonment accidentally hit a piece of timber sticking out from the top of a small mound covered by stones. It laid bare a circular chamber within what was a Buddhist stupa filled with more than hundred small votive towers and relieve plaques similar to many Buddhist ruins of Central Asia. As the news spread in the village many villagers came to dig further in anticipation of discovering fortune. Instead, in the course of this 'irresponsible excavation' a mass of ancient manuscripts tumbled out from these votive structures. These were closely packed in what appears to have been a wooden box. It was found at the spot of the discovery that there were four stupas lying side by side on a square basement. The first two were well preserved and intact. These however had revealed nothing. The manuscripts were actually found in the third stupa. The 'din and commotion' caused as a result in the small village caught the attention of the local authorities.

At this stage further digging was ordered to be stopped and the Wazir of Gilgit took charge of the manuscripts. But before he could bring them into his custody, a considerable portion of these manuscripts and all the painted covers had passed into the hands of adventurers. The Wazir got the manuscripts in bundles of jumbled leaves with several lost and damaged – a fate similar to those met by Bower Manuscript and Bakhshali Manuscript at the time of their discovery more than four decades earlier.

Finally the manuscripts were lodged for safe custody in the office of the local Tehsildar.

Just about the time the manuscripts were discovered, Aurel Stein, the great Central Asian explorer and archaeologist was passing through Gilgit on way back to his alpine meadow Mohand Marg near Kangan in Kashmir after his failed 4th Expedition to Eastern China to which he had set out from Srinagar on August 11, 1930. At the time of the start, Stein had chosen the Gilgit Road, the fastest way to Kashgar. And when he was returning crest-fallen after his passport had been recalled and he had been prohibited from doing any archaeological work by the Chinese authorities, the news about the discovery of the manuscripts in Gilgit sounded music to his ears. Stein had endured harassment of being ordered to deposit in Kashgar all the antiquities he had quietly unearthed during his travels. However, and fortunately so, he had been permitted to bring back photographs of the finds but for which the results of his 4th Expedition would have been lost forever.

Obligated to wait for the arrival of his remaining caravan of men and animals and sulking under the circumstances, it eased Stein's hurt when the authorities in Gilgit, in the full knowledge that he was an expert on old manuscripts, invited him to survey the discovered manuscripts. Stein obliged the authorities. From a rapid examination of the manuscripts he concluded them to belong to the middle of the first millennium (5th-6th centuries) but not later than its closing centuries. He concluded that the manner of the deposit, the writing etc. corresponded to those of Buddhist Turkestan. According to him, 'no single find of such magnitude had ever been made there and in India'.

Following the examination of the manuscripts, Stein "could almost console

himself with the thought that the whole venture (failed 4th expedition) had not been in vain." An account from Stein's personal narrative reads: "If the discovery had been made when I passed through Gilgit in 1900, I might well have undertaken the complete clearing of this stupa and three smaller ones still intact which closely adjoin it. But under the changed conditions the matter must be left to the Kashmir State authorities." Aurel Stein had learnt the lesson his failed expedition had just taught him. However, he was happy "to have been able to acquire specimens which had passed into villager's hands and thus to have saved them from dispersal."

Trouble in Srinagar

Even as the realization of the importance of the discovery of these manuscripts was not fully settled and the euphoria of having struck the rare discovery within the territorial domains of the state had not ebbed, Srinagar embroiled in a political trouble fomented by a non-native Muslim named Abdul Qadir. He had come as a cook to a European tourist, but no one knew for sure from where he had come to Srinagar 'Even today no one knows who he was or where he vanished'. Some opinions point that he was an 'agent provocateur from Pakistan (then still unfounded) and worked for the British Secret Service'.

It was on June 21, 1931 that the 'mysterious Abdul Qadir' addressed a large Muslim gathering after the Friday prayers at the mosque of Shah Hamadan. His speech was seditious and he spit venom against the Maharaja. It resulted in his arrest and appropriately so. But his arrest fomented unrest among the locals whose religious passions he had aroused. In the continuing unrest and boiling tension soon the government realized that it was not possible

to hold his trial in the Session's Court. As the protests and demonstrations grew, the authorities decided to shift the trial to the Central Jail. But what happened was unexpected, unthinkable and unimaginable. A crowd of more than five thousand riotous people, highly motivated and indoctrinated, attacked the Jail on the day trial was to be held- July 13, 1931. Police failed to control the mob. The ransacking mob tore through the security gates of the Jail. It resulted in a riot like situation when restive prisoners went berserk. In desperation, the police opened fire that left 21 dead on the spot. The tragic event brought gloom and sent the state into a political vertigo.

The summer of 1931 thus came to be a turning point in the history of Kashmir. It had come with mixed luck. While the discovery of the manuscripts in Gilgit was a matter of foreseeable celebrations for anticipated fame it would bring, as was indicated by Stein's preliminary report, the happenings of July 13, 1931 sent the state into a state of gloom. As a result of the fallout of the riots, the priority of the state to entrust the just discovered manuscripts for further survey, study and analysis at the hands of competent scholars fell far too low in the urgent list of actions. Restoring peace and order became the only priority and urgent measures in this direction were enforced without any loss of time.

Announcement of the Discovery

But Stein knew their importance and realized the urgency of informing the world about this great find. Camped on his beloved Mohand Marg "with its view of the mountains mighty and immutable" Aurel Stein sat down to write a report on the discovery of these manuscripts. He sent it to the Statesman and the London Times. Both the newspapers carried the report in

their editions of July 24, 1931. The news, at last, was announced to the world. Soon "it followed with international media publishing special supplements to inform the world that history was in the making. Editorials claimed that it was 'world property' and should be protected by the Maharaja. It also suggested combined international team of scholars should be constituted to decipher their contents. Following this, leading Buddhist scholars from all over the world flocked Gilgit to unravel the mysteries".

Among those who visited the spot of the find included M. Hackin, a leading European scholar and an expert on old manuscripts. According to him 'the place of discovery was about three miles to the north of Gilgit in the mountains' – an assertion different from earlier claims and even as confirmed by Aurel Stein in his dispatches to the Statesman and the London Times. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that it was Aurel Stein who announced to the world about the discovery of the Gilgit Manuscripts or more correctly Naupur Manuscripts, as some experts refer these to, after the village where they were found.

Scholars & Authorities Deliberate

While Stein rejoiced on the discovery of these unique and rare manuscripts, he was deeply pained by the riots that had broken out immediately thereafter in Srinagar. Camped at Ganderbal in Kashmir, he poured out his anguish about the riots that had engulfed the city. In a letter dated August 9, 1931 addressed to NityanandShastri, his close native friend whom he referred to as 'the crest jewel among the scholars of Kashmir', he wrote: "Please forgive if I thank you but briefly at this time in English for your kind letter. I am kept exceedingly busy with work of all sorts and cannot find to write as I should like. I wish you had been

able to give me better news than those about the serious out-break in the city. You know that my sympathy is fully with those who have been so wantonly attacked and injured. I know enough of the history of Kashmir to have realized it long ago that tame as the people apparently are in ordinary times, trouble may always arise if there is any sign of weakness about. I hope that now that order has been enforced. I hope it will be maintained with the strong hand and needless fears will cease. The appointment of Raja HariKrishenKaul as Prime Minister is certainly encouraging. I have known him and his family for a long time as deserving full confidence. By the time I come down to the valley I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you more than once for a good talk. I may then perhaps be less pressed for time than I am at present”.

Raja HariKrishenKaul was a former pupil of Aurel Stein during his tenure as the Registrar of the Punjab University and the Principal of the Oriental College, Lahore (1888-1899). The strain of continuous heavy work in Kashmir- post riots- took toll of the prime minister's health. He was advised by the doctors that unless he took complete rest for a considerable time his health was likely to completely break down. Raja HariKrishenKaul, accordingly, applied for a month's leave. The Maharaja was pleased to grant it. He, however, was unable to replace him without importing an officer from outside. After some deliberations, Maharaja Hari Singh obtained the services of Colonel E.J. D. Colvin of the British Foreign Office to carry out the work of the prime minister on leave. Before coming on leave, however, Raja HariKrishenKaul chalked out a complete programme for all that was needed to be done for restoring peace and order in the state.

It was about six months later sometime in early 1932 that Raja HariKrishenKaul while at Jammu received information that the manuscripts in question had safely reached Srinagar. By the order of Maharaja Hari Singh, the Wazir of Gilgit had sent these to Srinagar. The Maharaja, a keen lover and patron of culture realized the value of these manuscripts and decided them to have published. In deference to the wishes of the Maharaja, HariKrishenKaul gave orders to his office to arrange for the examination of the manuscripts through Aurel Stein who was just at the time preparing for a short exploratory tour to the North Western Frontier Provinces. Stein made a quick detailed examination of the manuscripts in Srinagar. Immediately thereafter, he left for his exploratory tour.

In a letter from Baluchistan dated March 21, 1932 sent to Raja HariKrishenKaul, Stein made a recommendation that the manuscripts may be sent to French scholar Sylvain Levi or else he be invited to Kashmir at the state expenses for their study . To this, HariKrishenKaul in a letter from Lahore dated May 14, 1932 wrote to Stein: “I think asking him to come to India is out of the question but since you consider perfectly safe to send the manuscripts to Mr. Sylvain Levi, I am forwarding copy of your letter to Colonel Colvin with the recommendation that your instructions may be acted upon. He will no doubt decide the question under the order of His Highness. I have tried to impress upon him the importance of the work”.

Sadly, the ongoing political events in Kashmir pushed the urgency of any action on the Gilgit Manuscripts to backburner of the state's agenda. No action followed during the remaining tenure of Raja HariKrishenKaul as the prime minister and Colonel E.J. D. Colvin who eventually

succeeded him. The treasures remained locked up for nearly six years in the Government Records Department till the assumption of office of the Prime Minister by DewanBahadurGopalaswamyAyyangar in 1938 A.D. He was a man of “great determination and definite policy”. At the instance of his Chief Secretary Ram Chand Kak, an accomplished archaeologist and “student of Sanskrit culture” who himself later rose to become the prime minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Gopalaswamy inducted NalinakshaDutt to take up the work of editing the manuscripts for the Kashmir Darbar. The eminent scholar, a Ph.D. from the Calcutta University was a professor at Fort Williams College, Calcutta in the Imperial India.

NalinakshaDutt's attention towards these manuscripts was first drawn by the great patron of Indian culture Dr. NarinderNath Law. Dr.Law was also the Editor of Indian Historical Quarterly. It was Dr. N.N. Law who suggested to Maharaja Hari Singh to get the manuscripts edited and then published. N.N. Law took the initiative to nominate NalinakshaDutt for the task and sent him to Kashmir for obtaining first-hand information on these manuscripts. However, the then Vice- Chancellor of the Calcutta University Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, a great patron of the revival of ancient Indian culture desired the manuscripts to be obtained from the Kashmir Darbar and if the Darbar decided not to publish them. Dr.Shyama Prasad Mookerjee gave NalinakshaDutt the letter of recommendation requesting the Kashmir State to provide him necessary facilities for examining the manuscripts. RaiBahadur R.P. Chanda also recommended NalinakshaDutt to Ram Chand Kak.

Publications

Equipped with these recommendations, NalinakshaDutt commenced, in collaboration with Vidyavardhi Shiv Nath Sharma, the learned Head Pandit of His Highness Maharaja Hari Singh, on transcription of the manuscripts. Simultaneously, about the same time in 1938 A.D., Pandit Madhusudan Kaul Shastri was deputed by the Kashmir Darbar (government) to carry out further excavations at the site for more finds if any, since one stupa was still not opened. He, however, did not find anything of importance in the already excavated stupas but recovered three or four manuscripts from the earlier unexcavated fourth stupa. Alongside, work on editing and publication progressed with even pace.

In association with Vidyavardhi Shiv Nath Sharma and Professor D.M. Bhattacharya, NalinakshaDutt successfully published the first volume of the work in 1939.A.D. Others who assisted Dutt included Pandit Ramdhona Bhattacharya, Professor B.M. Barua, Professor VidhusekharaShastri and Dr. P.C. Bagchi. NalinakshaDutt's student A.C. Banerjee also rendered a considerable assistance in seeing the publication through the press.

The first part written mainly in early form of Brahmi and Pali scripts comprised texts of Anna-panna-vidhi, Bhaisajaya guru sutram, Ekadasamukham, Srimahadevi vyakarnam, Ajit sena vyakarnam, Sarvatathagatadrishthana, Sattvalokana, Buddhaksetra and Savadarsanavyuham. Besides, it contained chronological list of various Buddhist Shahi kings of Gilgit.

The second part comprising Samadhiraja sutra also called Candrapradipa sutra was

published in 1941 A.D. Its manuscript had been discovered in two installments; the first of which contained the later portions from chapters XVII while the second contained the remaining portions from chapters I to XVI. This manuscript written in Gupta character of the 6th-7th century contained 165 leaves with 7 lines per folio.

The third part containing 185 leaves comprised Vinayavastu, a treatise on monistic discipline. It was published in 1943. In the first part appeared four vastus (VII to X), part two contained the remaining four vastus (XI to XIV) and a portion of XVth. Several leaves of this manuscript were however, lost. The script used in the manuscript is mostly upright Gupta.

All the three volumes printed by J.C. Sarkhel for the Calcutta Oriental Press were dedicated to Maharaja Hari Singh. Years later, in 1984 A.D. Nalinaksha Dutt edited the IVth volume also. It was published by Sri Sat Guru Publications. In the same year Bibliotheca Indo-Budhica also published his entire corpus on these manuscripts in 9 volumes under Series Volume 14 to 19 and 22 to 24. Also the digital version of these manuscripts is available with the Hathi Trust Digital Library.

Characteristic Features

The language of Gilgit Manuscripts is similar to that of the Buddhist canons like Mahavastu, Lalitavistara, Sadharma-pundarka and Suvarnaprabhasa. A characteristic feature of all Gilgit Manuscripts is that there is no space left between end of one text and the beginning of the other. Pagination is continuous like Tibetan xylographs. In fact when Dutt and Shiv Nath, the learned Head Pandit of Maharaja Hari Singh commenced to work on these manuscripts, they found a manuscript

beginning from 124, giving an impression that 123 leaves were missing or lost. On comparison of this manuscript with a Tibetan version, it was found that it lacked only folios 122 and 123 (two leaves). As the numbering started from 123 and not 1, it indicated that the manuscript was preceded by another manuscript which of course is lost and bore page numbers 1 to 123.

Another interesting feature of these manuscripts is that being among the oldest manuscripts of the world (5th-6th century) and oldest ever discovered in India, they have survived for almost fifteen hundred years. Gyan Marwah attributes it to two reasons; firstly, they are written on Bhojpatra that does not decay or decompose easily and secondly also because of sub-zero temperature of the Gilgit region where they were buried like 'time capsule'.

However, according to Aurel Stein, "their remarkable good preservation is due largely to the dryness of the climate and perhaps also to the lingering respect among the Hindukush hill people for relics of their pre-Islamic past". Of special interest in the corpus of these manuscripts is a pothi written in Central Asian Brahmi on paper. The use of this material clearly suggests that this particular manuscript was written in Eastern Turkestan. This is borne by the fact that the manufacture of paper first invented in China at the beginning of 2nd century A.D. was introduced to this region by sometime about the 4th century. Several manuscripts show an early form of Brahmi writing on what is known as Sarada in Kashmir.

Early Translations

Gilgit Manuscripts are unique in the context of their discovery. They are the only manuscripts in the world which were believed to exist, much before their discovery,

from their much earlier Chinese and Tibetan translations. In his essay: *Gilgit Manuscripts- Piecing Together Fragments of History*, eminent scholar and an expert on these manuscripts Gyan Marwah writes: "In fact in 1897, i.e. 34 years before it was discovered, the Buddhist Text Society, Calcutta, had published references to the Gilgit Manuscripts saying that if it were to ever to be found, it would unravel the ancient history of several communities as it is considered to be the oldest Buddhist manuscript." Nonetheless, finding the original manuscripts was a great surprise.

Experts are of the opinion that it was the Buddhist monk Narendrayasa of the northern Tshi Dynasty who translated these into Chinese in 567 A.D. However, his work is believed to be lost now. Another incomplete translation was made by Shih-sien-kun of the Sun Dynasty in 420-479 A.D. A third translation was prepared by Nagan-she-kao. From these incomplete translations it can be inferred that the original sutras of the Gilgit Manuscripts may have been in existence before 2nd century A.D. As these earlier translations were of shorter texts, they suggested the original manuscripts too were short ones.

Of the other translations, two French Orientalists Prof. Sylvain Levi and Edward Chavannes long ago before the discovery of the original Sanskrit manuscripts prepared a French translation of these from the text preserved in a Chinese manuscript. Perhaps it was in this knowledge that Aurel Stein in 1932 A.D., following the discovery of the manuscripts in 1931 A.D., had recommended to Raja Hari Krishen Kaul that Sylvain Levi was eminently qualified (given his earlier experience of having translated them into French from a Chinese manuscript) to edit and publish the original manuscripts.

Supplementary Notices

In June 1967 A.D., Dr. Priyatosh Banerjee visited Kashmir to study the painted wooden covers of two manuscripts then preserved in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum in Srinagar. These two manuscripts were the ones that were unearthed by Pandit Madhusudan Kaul Shastri during the second phase of excavations to locate more of the veritable treasure in 1938 A.D. Following the excavations then, Pandit Madhusudan Kaul Shastri published a short report on the manuscripts and other antiquities found in the excavations in the quarterly journal of the Mythic Society, Bangalore.

At the time, Dr. Priyatosh undertook the study; he made full use of Pandit Madhusudan Kaul's work that he obtained with the kind permission of Jawaharlal Bhan, the Curator of the museum and Prof. P.N. Pushp, then Director, Libraries & Archives, Srinagar. Manuscript (1) consisted of 54 leaves. It measured 6 by 25 centimeters and was written on palm leaves with 7 lines per folio. According to Priyatosh it is written in late Gupta script. The second manuscript written on birch-bark measured roughly 7 by 30 centimeters. Each folio carried 9 lines. Both these manuscripts are written in black ink. The wooden covers carried the figures of Avalokitesvara. Ever since, these laminated manuscripts have been kept in fire-proof vaults of the Sri Pratap Singh Museum. "They are neither displayed nor permitted to be photographed. A new building costing 30 corers awaits their arrival" reports Masood Husnain of E.T. Bureau.

Story of Official Theft

On June 1, 2009, local Kashmir press carried a dispatch under the caption: 'A Story of Theft of Gilgit Manuscripts' by Tariq Ali

Mir, a Srinagar based journalist. According to Mir, former Director Archives, Srinagar, Mohd Yusuf Taing says: "I have been witness to how part of Kashmir history- the manuscript was taken away from us by Delhi. In 1947, when India and Pakistan fought first war on Kashmir, Jawaharlal Nehru requested Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah that the manuscript be flown to Delhi for temporary safe keeping. Sheikh agreed and a special plane flew in from Delhi to transport the manuscript to National Archives, Delhi.

"After the ceasefire was announced, Sheikh asked Nehru to return the manuscript but the reply was 'D.G. Archives was out of country'. And when D.G returned, Nehru had imprisoned Sheikh for conspiracy against India. "In 1977 Sheikh as Chief Minister again asked Indira Gandhi to return the manuscript".

Taing further confirmed: "I reminded Sheikh again about Gilgit Manuscript and he was surprised that the manuscript had not been returned and immediately faxed Indira Gandhi asking for their return. But the manuscripts were not returned and after that they flatly refused to return them saying 'they are part of the National Archives'."

Suggestively, Srinagar is annoyed by this decision and action of Delhi. It echoes in Tariq Ali Mir's dispatch."In SPS Museum two empty engraved boxes await the return of once their prized possession, the Gilgit Manuscripts which were shifted to New Delhi in 1947 during Indo-Pak war for safety reasons but never returned to the state ever after. Heritage experts in Kashmir claim that there is a world-wide movement seeking return of artifacts to their original places/ owners but the display of Gilgit Manuscripts in National Archives, New Delhi, was a

brazen display of official theft of the state's heritage".

Different View of the Situation

On the contrary, Delhi views the situation differently. "When I joined the National Archives as D.G., I was astonished to discover that we had something with us like the Lotus Sutra. They have been with us before Partition" says Prof. Mushirul Hasan, Director General, National Archives, New Delhi. Similarly, the eminent Buddhist scholar Lokaish Chandra says, "The manuscripts have been my 'playmates' for 77 years. As a young boy I have seen Japanese Buddhist monks invited by Gandhiji beating drums and reciting the Nichiren mantra 'nammyohorengekyo' which means 'I devote my life to the law itself'. An Indian Army general in 1935 gave the Gilgit manuscripts to my historian father Raghu Virra. When I asked him what they were, he said to me "you know monks who beat the drums? These manuscripts contain their scriptures".

About the presence of the Gilgit Manuscripts in the National Archives, informs Narayani Ganesh: "At Raghu Virra's request Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru obtained the manuscripts". She bases this fact on the claims made by Dr. Lokaish Chandra.

Same Contents but Different Meanings

As to what the manuscripts are all about, yet again Srinagar and Delhi have diametrically different views and implied meanings. Avers, Tariq Ali Mir: "The manuscript is the story of one of the first resistance movements launched by native Kashmiri Nagas against the onslaught of Buddhist rulers". It is Kashmir's link to Central Asian republics where similar manuscripts have been found. However, it

is the only one written in Sanskrit and Pali. It bears engraving of a Chinara tree which proves that Chinara is native and not imported from Persia, generally believed”.

Dr. Lokaish Chandra views the whole subject of these manuscripts from an entirely different perspective.” In an era of war and conflict for the first time, the sutras gave to East and Central Asian kingdoms a value system and impressed the fact that real treasures are not precious metals and territories but found in the mind”, explains Dr. Chandra. He adds, “The Lotus Sutra is a manual of Gross National Happiness and Gross Individual Happiness; it is an international pan-human work that can be described as a heap of jewels, not words”.

Present Study & Its Scope

In an attempt to make these oldest historical documents found in India available for wider study by scholars and to bring their importance in more critical focus among the people in general, the National Archives, Delhi where the manuscripts are lodged currently has collaborated with Japan's Soka Gakkai International, the UN recognized NGO working for the spread of the Lotus Sutra and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy and launched a facsimile edition of the Lotus Sutra. The scant edition of only 250 copies is primarily meant for select libraries and scholars.

“Two scholars from Japan are working on it with funding from research organizations. This could take up to 10 years as there are 437 leaves, each containing around 15 lines of prose”, says Professor. Mushirul Hasan, the Director General of the National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Following this initiative, the National Archives, Delhi on the request of Nawang Rigzin Jora, Minister of Tourism & Culture, Government of Jammu & Kashmir has sent facsimile version of the Lotus Sutra (Manuscript Series 12) to the state government for its preservation and show case of its rich ancient culture.

Nomination to UNESCO & Manuscript Treasures of India (Vijananidhi)

Given the uniqueness and importance of the Gilgit Manuscripts, the Government of India made a proposal to the UNESCO in 2006-07 for the inclusion of the Rigveda Manuscript and the Gilgit Manuscripts in the 'Memory of World Register'. While the Rigveda Manuscript was successfully accorded the proud status, the Gilgit Manuscripts failed in seeking the coveted status. Subsequently, however, on February 24, 2007, the Government of India under its National Mission for Manuscripts included the Gilgit Manuscripts to the list of 44 other Indian manuscripts selected under the 'Manuscript Treasures of India' named Vijananidhi.

Scattered Collection

Presently the entire stock of the Gilgit Manuscripts lies scattered. The major parts are in the National Archives, Delhi. Portions are housed in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar. And some fragmentary folios are reportedly believed to adorn the shelves of the British Museum, London and the Karachi Museum in Pakistan.

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Kamla Shanker in conversation with Padma Shri J.N Kaul during a book release function, 2002, New Delhi.



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